

As coordinated by Kids' Voting Youth Voice.

Charlotte Observer Viewpoint - Wednesday, April 29, 2009

From students: What to cut

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More Information

- [Mecklenburg Youth Voice](#)

What is MYV? Mecklenburg Youth Voice is a student-driven group to create and foster opportunities for student voice. MYV meets with leaders to give them a student perspective on important issues.

MYV is sponsored by Kids Voting, an organization that prepares children and youth for a lifetime of civic engagement.

Who can join? All high school students are eligible.

MYV Leadership Summit on May 20: High school students are invited to join MYV and Kids Voting May 20 for the Mecklenburg Youth Leadership Summit.

Want to know more? E-mail info@kidsvoting.org, call 704-343-6999, or visit www.kidsvoting.org.

A group of 20 to 25 high school students, members of Mecklenburg Youth Voice, suggest the following ideas for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools budget.

The students have worked on the issue since January. They asked friends and teachers for ideas, attended school board meetings and met and communicated with CMS leaders, including Superintendent Peter Gorman.

In the classroom

Students are in school to learn. Everything else is nice, but extra.

Prioritize the number of core classes available and reduce the number of electives such as high school ping-pong class and some other nonacademic classes.

Eliminate redundant field trips and projects. Don't cut things that help academics such as afterschool tutorials.

If teachers are going to lose their jobs, focus on the ones who don't care anymore and the bad teachers. If you want to know who they are, ask the students.

Students

Try new things to help students learn. Use videoconferencing. Make students pay for Advanced Placement tests, but refund the money for good scores.

Get N.C. law changed to make a four-day week for high schools. Make the school day longer and shorten our year by cutting breaks and wasted days after exams. We can use the extra days for homework, jobs, sports, rest or internships.

Let students help. We can do jobs at school for community service, independent study or punishment. Examples include mowing grass, landscaping, assisting with technology or the library, advising clubs, tutoring and cleaning.

Resources

Try year-round schools so that you can put more students into fewer schools.

Manage resources such as textbooks, computers, furniture and sports equipment. Some classrooms have way too many textbooks while others have none. Some schools have more computers and TVs than they can ever use. Trade from school to school.

Be green. Don't leave computers on day and night. Turn lights off at night.

Make PTAs buy things that help with academics. The jumbotron or big TVs for announcements are nice, but they don't help people learn more and pass tests.

Paper!

Don't waste paper! Stop sending useless printed handouts home with students. Set up parent and student e-mails and put report cards online.

One thing we want you to add to the budget: paper! Give teachers more paper to make copies for our classes. It is hard to do well on a test when you have to share your test copy or use the same paper copy the teacher has used for 5 years.

Administration

Use nonteacher positions at schools wisely. Rotate front desk positions such as registrar from school to school, like school nurses.

If extra help is needed during busy times like the beginning or end of the year, bring in retired leaders or business people to help, rather than have so many administrators.

Eliminate bonuses and put a salary cap on employees who make a lot of money. Measure performance and use that to adjust salaries higher if you need to.

Focus guidance counselors on what students need. For example, at the beginning of the year they help with student schedules. More counselors are needed then than later in the year.

Transportation

In neighborhoods where it is possible, integrate school bus transportation with the Charlotte Area Transit System. You will need fewer buses, and it will help CATS have more riders. It might also encourage city bus drivers to stop picking up students who are cutting class.

Group bus stops. We don't need to have them everywhere. Make older kids walk farther to get to the bus or school.